

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
July 14 & 15, 2004**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on July 14, 2004 in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Stedman, Ed Barnes, Aubrey Davis, Ruth Fisher, Elmira Forner, A. Michèle Maher, and Dan O'Neal.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Commission meeting minutes for April 15 & 16, April 21 & 22, and May 19 & 20, 2004.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Davis to approve meeting minutes for April 15 & 16, April 21 & 22, and May 19 & 20, 2004. The motion passed unanimously.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Doug MacDonald, Secretary, WSDOT, stated that the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) explains transportation needs and provides potential solutions. He shared that he is pleased overall with the WTP process. He commented on Transit and freight needs, and how important it is to address those needs. The plan is to move through the WTP with a broad look at all modes of transportation.

Commissioners discussed how valuable the Commission and Department's WTP outreach is to local governments and the public as a whole.

Mr. MacDonald provided an update regarding the Alaskan Way Viaduct draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). He briefly outlined the current status of build alternatives stating that the preferred alternative will be chosen following the final analysis. He also explained the challenges of the SR 24 project. Although there are unresolved issues, constructive conversations have taken place with the City of Yakima. He commented on the status of the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID), sharing that the Department has scaled down its efforts, but continues to monitor the situation.

The Hood Canal Bridge graving dock site project archeological dig is still in progress while the site is currently under construction. There are still archeological items being recovered

from the site.

He provided a briefing regarding the Seattle Monorail (Green Line Project). It is still yet to be determined exactly what air rights agreements or other legal instruments will be required at those locations where the monorail will need rights in relation to property owned by the Department. He explained that phase two of project planning would include the creation of a seven-member expert review panel. The Department is currently in discussion with parties involved in order to determine the composition of the panel.

Mr. MacDonald provided an update on the Transportation Performance Audit Board's (TPAB) Request For Proposal (RFP). He explained that TPAB has contracted with a consulting firm to perform a review of the Department's performance measures, capital program delivery for highways and ferries, and permit streamlining. The Department met with the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC), TPAB, and a representative from the consulting firm to discuss expectations. The Commission will be provided updates.

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, WSDOT, shared that she attended a Pacific Northwest Economic Region conference in Victoria, BC where border improvement planning for the 2010 Olympics was discussed. She explained that the Department has begun coordination with British Columbia to aide in meeting the challenges of hosting the Winter Olympic Games. More information will be provided to the Commission in the future.

Mr. MacDonald shared that the Department has completed an RFP for retaining a lobbying consulting firm. Denny Miller and Associates were awarded the contract and will performing federal lobbying activities for the Department in Washington DC.

Gummada Murthy, Director, Maintenance and Operations Division, provided an overview of the vehicle information systems. The OnStar Information System is a leading edge concept that will allow the motorist traffic information from their vehicle. The federal government and several other states are involved in advancing this system. The Commission will be provided periodic updates.

AGENCY REQUEST LEGISLATION

Don Griffith, Director, Legislative and Strategic Management Relations, provided an informational briefing regarding agency request legislation for the 2005 session.

Charles Prestrud, Acting HOV/TDM Manager, presented agency request legislation, Enhancing Penalties for Improper Use of HOV Lanes. This legislation would increase violation penalties, establish an HOV Lane enforcement and education account, and distribute the new revenue to the Motor Vehicle Fund and Education and Enforcement Account. He explained that this legislation would encourage continued compliance and education activities.

Mike Cummings, Urban Planning Office, briefed the Commission regarding the proposed agency request legislation High-Occupancy Toll Lanes (HOT). This legislation would allow for toll lanes on SR 167 in King County. The object of these lanes is to facilitate the operation of transit and other multi-occupant vehicles, allowing them to avoid congestion and providing improved travel times. The legislation requires the Department to report annually to the Commission and Legislature on the operational efficiency of the project, effectiveness for transit, revenue usefulness, and impacts on all highway users.

Tim Erickson, Administrator, Commercial Vehicle Services, provided a briefing regarding proposed agency request legislation regarding Vehicle Size and Weight. The proposed legislation would bring the Department's statute into compliance with the Federal Highway Administration's rule on external rearview mirrors used on vehicles in interstate transport.

Barb Ivanov, Director, Freight Strategy and Policy, provided an overview of the issues pertaining to moving sealed containers. Discussions with stakeholders indicate that the movement of sealed ocean-going containers with port district property at legal weight limits can be a hardship to the ports and their contractors. The proposed legislation would enable port districts to establish heavy-haul corridors within the district.

PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD

Paul Locke, shared his concerns regarding the effects of prevailing wage on transportation projects.

Dave Earling, shared his concerns regarding the Edmonds Crossing Project. He explained that the project received an accumulated \$23 million in federal, state and local funding. The project is in the final stages of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that should be completed in 2004. The site should be purchased in 2004, and would be prepared for construction to begin in 2007-09 biennium. If the schedule is realistic it is hopeful that the project start date would be advanced.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ON LEGAL MATTER

Chair Stedman closed the open meeting in order to conduct an executive session to discuss with legal counsel potential litigation to which the Commission or Department is, or is likely to become, a party.

WSDOT 2005-07 OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST

Bill Ford, Chief, Budget Services, presented the Department's *Draft* 2005-07 Current Law Budget for operating and capital programs, and the associated ten-year financial plan, to the Commission for finalization. He explained that the focus of the Current Law Budget focuses on project and program delivery. He provided an overview of budget detail.

Amy Arnis, Deputy Director, Strategic Planning and Programming, briefed the Commission regarding the budget pro forma.

Ms. Arnis provided a briefing regarding the Operating Budget, Capital Budget, and Ten-year Financial Plan. She explained the effects of bonding and revenue sources.

Kathleen Davis, Director, Highways and Local Programs, provided an overview of the Department's Local Programs 2005-07 Capital Budget Proposal outlining specific projects that are included.

Judy Giniger, Director, Public Transportation and Rail, provided an overview of the Department's 2005-07 Capital Budget Proposal for the Rail Capital Program. She explained the specifics of preexisting funds, and the 2003 funding package allocated to projects. She requested that the Commission consider cash flow and priority adjustments to the projects included in the cost scenarios. The Department is proposing changes to the current projects on the 2003 funding package list. She outlined the specific projects and summarized proposed adjustments.

Gummada Murthy, Director, Maintenance and Operations, presented an overview of the Traffic Operations Capital Budget Proposal. Projects include traffic and weather information cameras for motorist and media use, electronic freeway entrance equipment to enable traffic signal timing to be automatic in response to traffic flow, traveler information systems and electronic signing for motorist traffic advisories. He explained that federal earmark funding must be matched by state funds.

Ron Niemi, provided an overview of Capital Facilities, Capital Budget proposal that includes capital improvements to the Department's buildings and related site.

Mike Thorne, CEO, Washington State Ferries, provided an overview of the Capital Budget Proposal for the construction of new vessels and terminals, and repairs to vessels. He outlined specific ferry capital projects and relevant funding.

John Conrad, Assistant Secretary, Engineering and Regional Operations, provided an overview of the Highway Construction Program's estimated project cost scenarios. He explained that decisions made in the 2003-05 biennium with the program have impacts that carry over into the 2005-07 biennium. Some of the projects are over budget, some are under budget, and some projects require changes that would carry over into the next biennium. The program's budget will need to be adjusted as we move forward into each biennium. With limited funding available for the preservation of asphalt pavement, some currently planned paving projects will need to be deferred to the end of the 2005-07 biennium. This will allow for the Department to start construction on the highest priority paving projects first. Funding for the rehabilitation of concrete pavement is limited to completion of projects started in the 2003-05 biennium.

It was moved by Commissioner Davis, and seconded by Commissioner Forner to approve the Department's current direction in preparing the 2005-07 Current Law Budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Stedman stated that Commissioners would have at least another month to make a final decision on the budget package.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Selection of Audit Oversight Committee members.

Chair Stedman appointed Ed Barnes and himself as members, and Elmira Forner as Chair of the Audit Oversight Committee.

Chair Stedman stated that the Audit Committee's work plan includes quarterly meetings. Commissioner Forner stated that the Audit Committee should be attending audit entrance interviews.

Commissioner Maher reported that she attended the Eastern Region's quarterly review meeting. She also attended routine meetings.

Commissioner Davis reported that he attended routine meetings.

Commissioner O'Neal reported that he has been attending Commerce Corridor sessions.

Commissioner Forner reported that she attended a recent TPEAC meeting. She also attended the Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council meeting. Commissioner Forner stated that she feels Commissioners should be entitled to more than 120 days per year.

Jennifer Ziegler, Administrator, responded that in order to increase Commissioner days it would require that the statute be opened in order to amend it, and the Commission's budget would need to be increased by the Legislature to compensate for the increase in days.

Commissioner Davis suggested that the days could be averaged.

Commissioner Barnes stated that he was impressed with attendance at the local Commission meeting held in Yakima, on June 23, 2004. He reported attending transportation related meetings in the Vancouver area, and the Commute Trip Reduction conference. He also attended a Legislative Audit Committee meeting.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Jennifer Ziegler, Administrator, provided an update to the Commission regarding the

Seattle Monorail Project. Commissioner Forner had expressed concern that a letter to the Seattle Monorail Project might conflict with Resolution 665. Ms. Ziegler explained that the monorail letter did not create a conflict with the resolution. Chair Stedman stated that Resolution 665 was approved by the Commission as written. The Commission's 2005-07 Operating Budget request was presented for review. The Commission will take action on the budget at the August 18 and 19, 2004 Commission meeting.

Ms. Ziegler briefed the Commission regarding its performance measures. She explained that the Office of Financial Management requires the Commission to implement performance measures, and periodically report those results. The Commission currently reports public satisfaction survey results, and provides an evaluation of the number of meetings that Commissioners attend where the public has been invited. Commissioners have indicated their dissatisfaction with the public meetings portion of the report. Other Boards and Commissions generally utilize interaction with the public as a performance measure. As possible alternatives the Commission might consider using hits to its website as an informational performance measure or presentations given to community organizations as another measure. Commissioner's expressed their concerns regarding what accountability measurements are necessary, and by what means the Commission's accountability is measured.

URBAN CORRIDORS OFFICE UPDATE – COMMUNICATION PLAN AND PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Linda Mullen, Director, WSDOT Communications Office, shared that the Department has kicked off its newest education campaign, "You're In The Drivers Seat", in several counties around the state. The campaign is advertised on billboards and busboards. Secretary MacDonald stated that this pilot program is intended to alert public awareness to safety.

Dave Dye, Administrator, Urban Corridors Office (UCO), briefed the Commission regarding UCO's Communications Plan and Public Outreach Research. UCO conducted public opinion research in April through June 2004. The purpose of the research was to provide baseline data for the development of UCO's communications plan update, and to provide useful information in the Washington Transportation Plan update. There were six focus groups, and a phone survey of residents in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties that were used to gather data. The information gathered provided UCO with the public's opinion of government and their worries about the economy. The research revealed that the public wants a simple plan that makes sense without raising taxes, or at least find the right mix of taxes, if raising them is necessary. The survey also indicated that the public's approval rate of the Department has increased to a two to one ratio.

Ms. Mullen explained that the first focus group consisted of environmental leaders that have environmental concerns and priorities. The issue was to find if their priorities were interrelated with the Departments. The outcome was that the focus groups that participated in the research shared the same environmental concerns as the Department.

Focus groups displayed interest in working with the Department towards mutual goals.

MOTORIST INFORMATION SIGN PROGRAM STATUS REPORT

Toby Rickman, State Traffic Engineer, provided a briefing regarding the status of the Motorist Information Sign Program. He explained that a preliminary injunction was filed against the Department that prevented proposals for outsourcing the program as directed by the Legislature in 2002. At the same time the Legislature removed funding for the program. During the 2004 Legislative session the Legislature determined to restart the program through June 2005. The program restarted in April 2004 with its own workforce, a new fee schedule and charges. Due to the fee increases, about a quarter of the participating businesses have indicated that they will not participate. The next steps are to communicate with businesses the program benefits, and to get new businesses on the waiting lists posted on the signs. Depending on how the program works the Department may have to make future adjustments. At the present time the program is serving its business customers, meeting the basic objectives of the program, and providing information to motorists traveling on the state's highways.

Secretary MacDonald stated that the Department's objective is to make certain that the program works. He shared his concerns regarding the possibility of out sourcing the program.

APPROVAL OF I-90 TWO-WAY TRANSIT AND HOV PROJECT AND THE AMENDMENT TO THE 1976 I-90 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Judy Giniger, Director, Public Transportation and Rail Division, provided an update of actions that have been taken on the I-90 Transit and HOV project. She explained that the parties to the 1976 Memorandum of Agreement have taken action to adopt the project, the preferred alternative, and have also moved to approve the amendment to the 1976 agreement. She explained that the Seattle City Council, Bellevue City Council, and King County Council have approved the project and the agreement to the amendment. The Mercer Island City Council has not approved as of yet. The Sound Transit Board expects to act after the Mercer Island City Council. The Commission would be requested to take action after all parties have acted.

WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION PLAN WORKSHOP

Charlie Howard, Director, Strategic Planning and Programming, provided a briefing regarding Bottlenecks and Chokepoints. He explained that the terms have been used in different ways. A bottleneck is where the roadway system narrows. An example is losing a lane. This occurs in limited areas. Chokepoint is a generic term, and is an event that causes the traffic congestion on the system. An example is I-5 southbound over the Ship Canal Bridge. There is merging traffic that would cause the system to not live up to its potential. Focusing attention on targeted areas would enable the system to flow better. The Legislature has funded a study of I-5 to allow for potential improvements in

traffic flow. The study is currently focusing on I-5 through Seattle. Chair Stedman inquired about the Legislature's discussion study on moving HOV lanes to the right side of the interstate. Mr. Howard responded that the question was if money could be saved in direct access ramps if transit buses ran on the right side of the roadway where exits would be easier to access. The problem would be that if transit service were on the right side, because of entering and exiting traffic, it would slow transit service. Left hand exit lanes allow for exiting directly to park-in-ride lots. Mr. Howard stated that there is a crisis in demand and capacity all across the country. Systems are overloaded, and statistics show that delays have increased at major airports, as a result of airspace and landing space being at capacity. The third runway at SeaTac Airport should solve the problem until 2023. Then again the system will begin to show delays.

Commissioner Davis asked if the third runway at SeaTac Airport would impact passenger rail service. Mr. Howard responded that he would need to do some research to answer the question. Rail lines at ports are experiencing bottlenecks and chokepoints that cause backups on the highways. The highest delay chokepoint section in the state is I-5 at I-90. City streets and County roads also experience delays along with urban growth that will continue to worsen in the future. Lost capacity is at 50% during peak times due to congestion. Secretary MacDonald shared his concern regarding vehicle speeds and distance between vehicles, as congestion increases the distance decreases due to behavior of people shrinking the capacity of the road. To maximize the systems efficiency the goal should be to keep traffic flow above the curve. There are several options, such as, operational measures, which control the number of vehicles using a lane (HOV lanes, ramp metering or pricing); capital investments which would expand capacity). The state has addressed the demand capacity imbalance in the system in the past by planning for and making investments in the system. Capital investments have been targeted on improvements such as HOV lanes, ramp metering, signal synchronization and strategic general capacity improvements.

Targeted capital investments at bottlenecks and chokepoints cost less than full corridor projects, and can result in a recognizable reduction in delay and improved flow for the traveler – they represent the biggest bang for the “short” buck to be invested in capacity expansion solutions. Mr. Howard suggests that bottleneck and chokepoints can be designed to be the first phase or increment of a total corridor project. Keeping above the curve, may include a combination of operational improvements. Bottleneck and chokepoint investment options could be developed to improve travel for: commuters, freight, interregional movement and recreation and event access.

The second part of Bottlenecks and Chokepoints is transportation access. It will focus attention to people who don't drive: who they are; the magnitude of need; and the public responsibility to provide mobility and access to events of daily life. The elderly, people with disabilities, children and low-income families are the four groups that need special transportation. Transportation challenges in rural areas include: limited options, long distances, and providing access to people who cannot drive. To maintain economic viability of rural communities, people must maintain access to urban centers for banking,

commerce, law, engineering, medicine and other specializations. There are rural health care challenges for specialized care or acute care that have been a long-standing issue in rural areas. Ms. Giniger mentioned that the Department would begin meetings with Greyhound to find alternate transportation to rural communities that have lost the Greyhound service in their local city to the nearest Greyhound bus station. Based on this statement, they will also examine how to distribute grants for state and federal funding. Chair Stedman addressed the rural cities that have never had bus service, bringing up that there are two groups that need to be continually addressed: communities that bus service has abandoned and communities that have never had service. Ms. Hammond reassured the Commission that the state is concerned about both groups. When grant applications come in, with limited resources to provide transportation to these communities, the state has to look at population and the greatest need. Mr. Howard pointed out that there is a need to define the states role in providing specialized transportation services. He outlined State and Federal Laws that address access to specialized transportation services. Ms. Giniger noted that the 2003 revenue package provided state funds for both public transportation agencies and non-profit organizations.

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) is a statutory council created in 1998. Members include state agencies, DSHS, WSDOT, OSPI, CTED, Association for Pupil Transportation, Community Transportation Association of America-Northwest, Washington State Transit Association, and two citizens. The purpose of ACCT is for state agencies with transportation responsibilities to work together to remove barriers to sharing resources. The Council is advocating with Federal agencies to change policies, focusing on measuring results for efficiencies. Brokers are businesses who set up call centers where clients call in and ask for rides and the brokers find the most appropriate ride.

Mr. Howard quickly reviewed state and federal funds used to alleviate rural isolation from. In summary, four issues were identified: the growing elderly population with distinct needs, demand response services increasing with limited funding, better coordination is between services, rural areas losing travel options.

Chair Stedman asked Mr. Howard to explain how the Commission can serve this effort in the series of workshops presented. WTP wants to go out to collect data, be able to present it to Commission to analyze policy decisions and create a proposal to the legislature regarding the Transportation Access. Chair Stedman pointed out that the Commission feels it is important to include Transportation Access into WTP. Commissioner Davis suggested that Mr. Howard report to the Commissioners more options including funding for ACCT and the framework for costs. Commissioner Davis would like to see quantity of chokepoints and bottlenecks. Commissioner Fisher would like to see definition of costs. Next month Mr. Howard will discuss Efficiencies, Health and the Environment and possibly the Economy.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m., on July 15, 2004.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DALE STEDMAN, Chair

DANIEL O'NEAL, Vice-Chair

EDWARD BARNES, Member

DICK FORD, Member

ELMIRA FORNER, Member

RUTH FISHER, Member

A. MICHÈLE MAHER, Member
Member

DOUGLAS MACDONALD, Ex-Officio
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

JENNIFER ZIEGLER, Administrator

DATE OF APPROVAL